

“(B) developing innovative and effective models of professional development for improving staff qualifications and skills for staff living in rural communities;

“(C) removing barriers related to outreach efforts to eligible families in rural communities;

“(D) removing barriers to parent involvement in Head Start programs in rural communities;

“(E) removing barriers to providing home visiting services in rural communities; and

“(F) removing barriers to obtaining health screenings for Head Start participants in rural communities.”.

Page 148, after line 25, insert the following (and make such technical and conforming changes as may be appropriate):

“(5) ensure that in entering into such contracts as described in paragraph (1), such entities will address the needs of grantees in both urban and rural communities.”.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 348, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. SPACE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Space-Hare-Welch-Altmire amendment to H.R. 1429.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that Head Start is critical for our Nation's working families. We are a Nation founded on equality and opportunity for all. All of our Nation's children deserve the opportunity to participate in early childhood development programs regardless as to the financial standing of their families.

Head Start programs in rural areas face many unique challenges in delivering services. The January 2007 report from the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services confirms the unfortunate reality that rural Head Start programs are, in many ways, disadvantaged.

Simply put, in rural and geographically isolated areas the distance between Head Start providers and participants is a significant mountain to climb. Especially as gas prices continue to stretch both program and household budgets, the cost of transportation can be prohibitive. These distances can also impede Head Start programs from reaching out to families eligible to participate. It is certainly a tragedy when families can't enjoy the opportunities offered by Head Start programs because they didn't know about them, not because they weren't there.

I am particularly concerned about barriers to parental involvement. I believe that parental involvement fostered by Head Start programs is incredibly important. There is no responsibility of our society more sacred or profound than raising our children. Bringing parents together to share in this experience strengthens our communities, creating bonds that can bring them closer together.

In rural areas, parental involvement is again a challenge. The realities of less advantaged areas can keep parents

away from these programs. This is simply a missed opportunity to build our communities.

I believe that H.R. 1429 offers significant improvements to rural Head Start programs, and I applaud the work of my colleagues on the Committee on Education and Labor for making assistance to these areas a priority.

In particular, I wish to thank my colleague from Illinois (Mr. HARE) for his amendment in committee that draws attention to the challenges of teacher retention and the recruitment of new participants in our Nation's rural areas.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I rise to claim the time in opposition, though I am not opposed to the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I think that this amendment makes it a stronger bill. Rural grantees are more likely to rely on home visits due to problems associated with staffing and transportation. Head Start in-home programs are required to make a minimum of 32 visits per year, or one per week. In addition, there must be a minimum of 16 group socialization activities per year.

For this reason, I rise in support of this amendment to provide additional training and support to rural Head Start programs facing these challenges to ensure that all children can access the skills necessary to succeed in school.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE).

Mr. HARE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to join Congressmen SPACE, WELCH and ALTMIRE in introducing this amendment to improve Head Start programs for rural communities.

Much of my congressional district is rural. Therefore, I am very sensitive to the unique challenges that Head Start centers and rural families face in providing or accessing Head Start programs. Some of these challenges include instructor shortages, access to Head Start programs and outreach to eligible families.

As a member of the Education and Labor Committee, I had the privilege of addressing these concerns during the markup of this bill. The amendment we present today expands those efforts by directing the Education Secretary to provide the technical assistance and training to remove barriers to professional development, parental involvement, home visits and health screening in rural areas.

It is my hope that with this commitment from the Secretary and with the addition of services geared towards the needs of rural families, more eligible children will enroll in and experience the benefits of the Head Start program. Rural communities consist of the low-income populations that Head Start was created to serve. Therefore, it is critical that we address the challenges these communities face in administering Head Start to ensure that those families have the access to the opportunities they need and they so much deserve.

Again, I thank my colleagues for helping me on this issue, and I urge all Members to vote “yes” to improve the rural Head Start program by passing the Space-Hare-Welch-Altmire amendment.

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE).

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for his leadership on this issue, and I rise in strong support of this amendment. I am happy to lend my name to it, because this amendment simply says that rural communities which have distinct needs in Head Start programs will now have a level playing field with the changes that have been made under H.R. 1429, which I strongly support.

This bill builds on Head Start's proven success in a way that is going to benefit parents and teachers who are involved in the program. We want to ensure through this amendment that those successes carry forward into rural communities, specifically as it relates to professional development, parental involvement, home visits and health screenings.

So I am pleased to lend my name to this. It is a great amendment, and I thank the gentleman from Ohio for his leadership.

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from California, Chairman MILLER.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for offering this amendment and for bringing this perspective to this legislation, along with Mr. HARE and Mr. ALTMIRE and Mr. WELCH, and for representing the rural communities and raising these issues during this debate and during the consideration of this legislation.

Sometimes issues get overlooked in the rush to reauthorize the bill and to reauthorize it from a single perspective, so I appreciate this information that they have brought to us. I think the direction to the Secretary to review and to look at these barriers and to see what we can do to remove them so that we can assure both the participation of the children in the program and of their families and their parents as is designed by the law is important.

Mr. Chairman, I urge the adoption of the amendment.